

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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MEMORANDUM

Namibia: Status of the Settlement Process

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Efforts by the West to induce South Africa to relinquish control over Namibia under a UN-administered transition plan will reach a critical juncture on 7 January when a conference of all the participants in the settlement process convenes in Geneva. The conference will mark the first face-to-face negotiating session between the indispensable parties to the settlement: the South Africans and their Namibian allies on the one side and the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the principal Namibian insurgent group, on the other. UN officials will preside, and envoys from the West, the Frontline States, and Nigeria--all of whom have hitherto acted as mediators between the South Africans and SWAPO--will attend the conference as observers.

SWAPO and its Frontline backers, impatient after more than two years of South African footdragging, are bent on using the conference to extract a firm South African commitment to begin implementing the transition plan by March 1981; the conference has, in fact, been officially labeled the "preimplementation meeting." If such a commitment is not obtained, the negotiating process will probably break down, at least temporarily, with potentially serious repercussions for the West.

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This memorandum was written by the Africa Division, Office of Political Analysis, with contributions from other analysts in the Africa Division. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations; the Offices of Strategic Research, Economic Research, Geographic and Societal Research, and Central Reference; and the National Intelligence Officer for Africa. Questions and queries are welcome and should be directed to Chief, Africa Division, OPA,

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One immediate result would be an African-backed call in the UN Security Council for sanctions against South Africa. The West would then face a dilemma: accepting sanctions would result in economic hardships for the West and might lead South Africa to withdraw its backing for the UN plan altogether, but vetoing sanctions might prompt the black African states to abandon the UN plan and could also result in economic retaliation by Nigeria. The collapse of the Western mediation effort would probably fuel an expanded guerrilla war in Namibia that would heighten tensions throughout southern Africa and create opportunities for further Soviet inroads.

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Prospects for the conference are not auspicious. To obtain the agreement of all the participants to come to Geneva, UN Secretary General Waldheim had to gloss over several contentious issues:

- Status of the participants. SWAPO leaders insist that the "internal"--that is, pro-South African--parties attend the conference only as members of the South African delegation. The South Africans, however, have demanded that leaders of the internal parties participate on an equal footing with SWAPO and on at least one occasion have implied that Pretoria's representatives at the conference will merely serve as advisers to the Namibians.
- Further revisions in the UN plan. SWAPO and the Frontline leaders want the meeting to discuss only the modalities of implementing the UN plan; they oppose any important revisions. The South Africans and their principal internal allies have indicated that they want some basic revisions. Their most contentious proposal is for the participants at Geneva to reach agreement on constitutional arrangements for Namibia that would have the effect of preventing SWAPO from imposing one-party rule even if it wins a sweeping electoral victory over the internal Namibian parties.
- The March target date. All the participants at Geneva have accepted March 1981 as a general target date for beginning the implementation of the UN plan. SWAPO and the Frontline view the target date as nonnegotiable; they see the conference as a face-saving concession to South Africa and its Namibian proteges in return for a definite commitment to the target date. Pretoria has made its acceptance of the target date contingent on the success of the conference in fully dispelling South Africa's concern that the UN plan might be implemented in a way that would favor SWAPO.

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The disputes over these issues indicate that neither side is ready to begin a genuine dialogue, let alone make the mutual accommodations that are essential to make the UN transition plan work. Both sides want to avoid a prolonged war, but each would rather continue fighting than gamble on a plan that could put its enemy in effective control of Namibia. Hence, each side sees the Geneva conference as an opportunity to achieve tactical gains and neither is likely to accept any meaningful compromise in the absence of concerted pressures from the Western and African "observers."

The UN Transition Program

The UN plan for Namibian independence was proposed in 1978 by the five Western states then on the Security Council and known since as the Western Five--the United States, the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, and Canada. The plan, designed to head off the simmering guerrilla war in Namibia, was accepted in principle in 1978 by South Africa, SWAPO, and the Security Council. The plan calls for a truce between South Africa and SWAPO to be monitored by a 7,500-man UN military force. Seven months after the truce goes into effect, UN-supervised elections are to be held for an assembly that would devise a constitution for an independent Namibia.

Despite their acceptance of the plan, SWAPO and South Africa have differed sharply over the specifics of the truce arrangements. In late 1979, both sides accepted a compromise, proposed by the late President Neto of Angola, for a UN-monitored demilitarized zone that would eliminate SWAPO bases from Namibia and from a 50-kilometer strip north of the border. The DMZ formula, however, allows the South African military to retain 20 forward bases in Namibia during the initial truce period. The DMZ plan favors the South Africans, and SWAPO only acceded to it under heavy pressure from the Frontline States.

Since the accord on the creation of a DMZ, haggling by both sides over largely tangential issues has prevented Secretary General Waldheim from nailing down agreement on a starting date for implementing the plan. The latest obstacle has been South African insistence on proof that UN personnel, in overseeing implementation of the transition plan, would not favor SWAPO over the internal Namibian parties. This demand has its roots in a longstanding impasse between South Africans and the UN General Assembly, which has

recognized SWAPO as the sole authentic representative of the Namibian people; SWAPO, in fact, draws its support largely from a single tribe (by far the largest one in Namibia), the Ovambo.

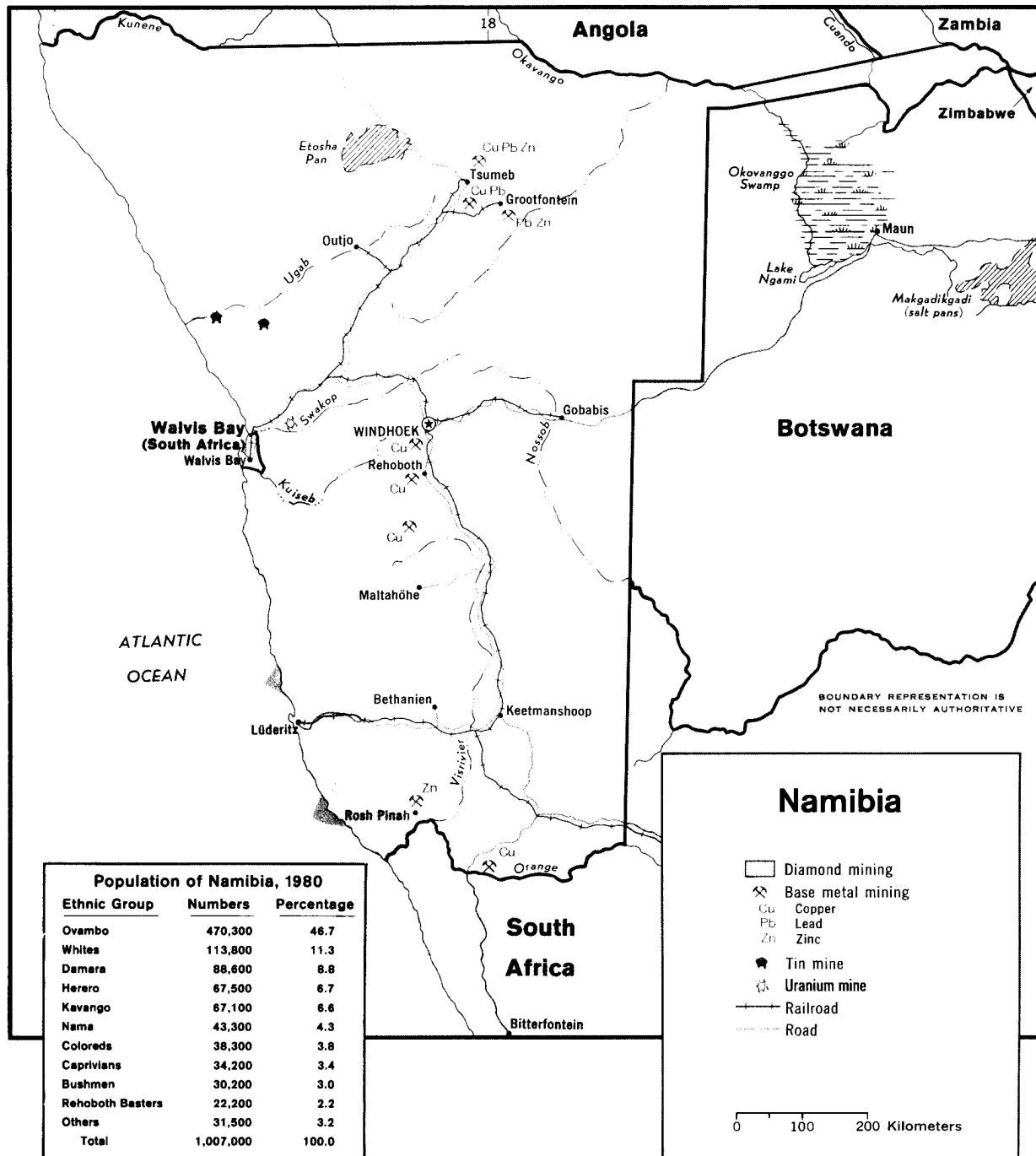
The Insurgency

During the nearly four years of negotiations on the UN plan, SWAPO guerrillas have increased the level and scope of their operations inside Namibia. The great majority of SWAPO attacks occur in the Ovambo tribal homeland in northern Namibia, where the guerrillas frequently attack economic targets and kidnap or kill Ovambos suspected of collaborating with the territorial administration. The decision by the South African Administrator General in Namibia not to hold elections in Ovamboland for provincial-level assemblies was an indirect admission of the slowly deteriorating security situation there.

Despite SWAPO's successes in Ovamboland, the 12,000-man South African military contingent in Namibia has been able to prevent the insurgency from spreading to other parts of the territory. SWAPO, moreover, still is able to operate only in small units; an attempt by SWAPO earlier this year to introduce conventional-sized military units into Ovamboland was a failure, resulting in a sharp increase in insurgent casualties.

Pretoria, though not facing a direct challenge for control of Namibia, is paying an increasingly heavy price for maintaining security there. Pretoria's own measure of its forces' efficiency--the kill ratio--bears evidence of growing guerrilla capabilities. In 1979, according to South African figures, 24 insurgents were killed for every South African soldier killed; in 1980 the ratio is closer to 10:1. The South African military probably lost some 90 soldiers in Namibia during 1980, three times the number it lost in 1979. This figure is still tolerable by military standards, but the mounting casualties are creating domestic concern in South Africa.

As the insurgency has intensified, South Africa has resorted to more frequent raids against SWAPO bases in southern Angola and southwestern Zambia. Several airborne strikes have gone over 200 kilometers into Angola and ground units have remained inside Angola and Zambia for weeks.



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Although these operations have inflicted heavy casualties and material damage on SWAPO, they have not long deterred guerrilla activities. Within the past year, South African incursion forces have met increasingly stiff resistance from the Soviet-equipped and Cuban-trained guerrillas.

Pretoria's "Dual Track" Strategy

South Africa's stalling tactics in the negotiations are intended to give it the option either of accepting the UN plan or unilaterally establishing a quasi-independent Namibian government. The overriding South African objective is to assure that either option would result in a Namibian government sufficiently responsive to Pretoria to assure South Africa's basic interests: maintenance of a buffer against the Soviet and Cuban military presence in Angola and continued access to Namibia's extensive deposits of uranium, diamonds, and other minerals.

To this end, the South African Administrator General in Namibia has groomed a multi-ethnic political coalition, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), that will either compete with SWAPO if an election is held under UN auspices, or try to rally popular support for a unilaterally installed government. The DTA, composed of 11 ethnic-based parties and led by a white, Dirk Mudge, won 82 percent of the votes in elections the South Africans held in 1978 despite a UN injunction; it now holds 41 of the 50 seats in the Namibian "National Assembly." In 1979, the South Africans gave the assembly limited legislative powers, and last July the Administrator General appointed an all-DTA "Council of Ministers" to share some of his executive powers. The South Africans believe that granting the DTA greater authority will enable the coalition to broaden its popular base, thereby increasing its chances of competing with SWAPO in UN-supervised elections.

The DTA, however, has failed to expand its support. Among whites, the coalition has suffered from general suspicions about the UN plan; a conservative white party opposed to the plan defeated Mudge's Republican Party in recent local elections.

The DTA's efforts to appeal to nonwhites are being undermined by the territorial administration's efforts

to contain SWAPO. The Administrator General has authorized the establishment of local home guards and a territorial force to augment the South African military units in Namibia. These local units are badly disciplined and often terrorize the local population; in many areas, particularly Ovambo-land, the home guard is feared more than SWAPO. Because of the DTA's attempt to portray itself as the internal government of Namibia, nonwhite dislike of the home guard units is translating into opposition to the DTA.

Pretoria's recent move to institute compulsory military service for nonwhites in 1981 has again identified the DTA with an unpopular decision. Many nonwhites will refuse to serve in a territorial force and young Ovambos, faced with the prospect of fighting for the South Africans, may choose instead to cross into Angola and fight for SWAPO.

South African officials, acknowledging trends within Namibia, admit privately that SWAPO probably would defeat the DTA if a UN-supervised election were held soon. SWAPO would not only draw overwhelming support from the Ovambos, who make up 46 percent of Namibia's total population, but could also pickup support from moderates in other tribes who resent the DTA's collaboration with Pretoria.

Attitudes Toward the Geneva Conference

South Africa. Pretoria's delegation to Geneva will be under orders to push hard for revisions in the UN plan that would give the DTA the best possible chance in the elections and in shaping a constitution acceptable to South Africa. The South Africans may be hoping for developments at Geneva that would relieve them of blame for a collapse of the UN plan. They may hope, for example, that the presiding UN official will slight the leaders of the internal parties, or that the SWAPO delegates will walk out. Pretoria might believe that under these circumstances the Western Five would come around to the view that the UN plan would subvert the Western goal of genuine self-determination, or that SWAPO is scuttling efforts toward valid modification of the plan.

The South Africans realize, however, that such windfalls may not accrue from Geneva. Hence, Pretoria's agreement to participate in the conference indicates the South Africans have accepted the risk that the outcome at Geneva might compel them to either give a green light to the UN operation or appear as spoilers.

Pretoria is unlikely to agree to the UN plan unless it is convinced that it has done all it could to bend the plan to the advantage of South Africa and the DTA. Because Pretoria fears that SWAPO would win an open election despite South Africa's efforts to the contrary, Prime Minister Botha almost certainly intends to make the leaders of the DTA publicly agree to all transitional arrangements, so that they could not claim he sold them out. The South Africans can only achieve these two aims by holding to a consistent tactical line at Geneva--haggling until the DTA spokesmen get a full hearing on every issue, and until agreement is reached on transitional arrangements that give the South African Administrator General or his Namibian surrogates ample opportunities to counteract any UN partiality for SWAPO.

The Namibian "Internal Parties." The Administrator General has announced that 14 members of the DTA and 12 representatives of smaller parties have agreed to participate in the South African delegation. The leaders of the DTA fully share Pretoria's maximum objective of gaining international support for a Namibian government that they would dominate, but they are not eager to compete against SWAPO in an election conducted by the UN. Moreover, they fear that a SWAPO takeover would put them in personal danger.

The DTA leaders probably will follow cues from the South Africans at Geneva as long as Pretoria maintains a hard line, but they are likely to resist any compromise that Pretoria adopts. Foreign Minister Botha has gone to the Namibian capital of Windhoek several times in recent years to "explain" unpalatable switches in Pretoria's stance, but offstage arm-twisting may be more difficult at Geneva. The other Namibians in the South African delegation are a diverse lot, ranging from two centrists who probably would accept a compromise solution to three white rightwingers who probably would seize any opportunity to scuttle the UN plan.

SWAPO. For years there have been evident tensions within SWAPO between a militant faction which is determined to fight on to a decisive military victory, and a pragmatic faction which acknowledges that a military victory is remote and prefers to gamble on gaining power by means of the UN transitional program. SWAPO President Nujoma and his closest lieutenants appear to be militant; they seem

reluctant to give up control of the guerrilla force to face the prospect of open politicking.

During the persistent Western diplomatic efforts to devise transitional arrangements that are acceptable to both sides, Nujoma has time and again agreed to pragmatic compromises, only to resume a hard line designed to provoke the South Africans into actions that would scuttle the plan. Nujoma has announced that he will head the SWAPO delegation at Geneva, and his record suggests that he will take a hard position. Nujoma has recently said that SWAPO will never deal directly with the DTA leaders, a stance that very likely reflects a consensus of SWAPO's executive committee.

The Frontline. The leaders of the black African governments that will be represented at Geneva will be pressing for credible progress toward implementing the UN plan. Frontline leaders share to a considerable degree the Western objective of stopping the Namibian war before it spreads further. Although each of the Frontline States has sought military aid from one or another of the Communist states, the black leaders as a group want to avoid an increase in the Soviet and Cuban presence that would probably accompany a major expansion of the SWAPO insurgency.

Angola and Zambia, the two Frontline States that have allowed SWAPO to establish bases in their territory, have an even more immediate stake in keeping the insurgency in check. Zambian and Angolan leaders fear that any escalation of the war would draw more frequent and more economically and politically damaging South African raids. Luanda, moreover, probably calculates that Pretoria would retaliate for increased Angolan support for SWAPO by stepping up South African backing for Angola's UNITA insurgency; the initial Angolan proposal for a DMZ along the Namibian border was in part aimed at cutting off the flow of South African aid to Jonas Savimbi's group.

The desire to avoid sanctions will be another major incentive for the black African governments to work for a positive outcome at Geneva. Some of the Frontline leaders have unrealistically optimistic notions about the impact of sanctions on South Africa, but there is a general recognition that an actual cutoff of trade and transport links with South Africa would be crippling for Botswana and Zimbabwe, and very costly to Mozambique and Zambia.

Nigeria and Tanzania have taken the lead in calling for UN sanctions and for increased military support for SWAPO unless the South Africans stop stalling. The two countries are relatively safe from the side effects of these actions. Each aspires to a broader African leadership role, however, and recognizes that the solidarity that grew out of the effort to resolve the Rhodesian war and the quest for a Namibian settlement would shatter if individual national leaders had to choose between continued delays in implementing the UN plan or sanctions and increased conflict.

The Frontline nations, then, will have much to gain by pushing SWAPO at Geneva toward compromises that could lead to implementation of the UN plan. None of the black African leaders, however, can afford to push an agreement that SWAPO and its more militant backers could later depict as a "sellout". For this reason, the Frontline states may have insisted that Nujoma--who initially asserted that he would not attend the conference--be present at Geneva so that he could not repudiate decisions made there. Having the SWAPO leader in Geneva will also enable the Frontline envoys to induce the SWAPO delegation to accept compromises more quickly.

Nujoma could easily turn the tables on the Frontline representatives however, by engaging in verbal duels with the DTA delegates. In a confrontational atmosphere, advocating compromises would be even more embarrassing for the Frontliners than for the South Africans. The Frontline envoys must at least pay lip service to the UN and OAU premise that SWAPO is the sole authentic voice of the Namibian people.

Outlook for Geneva and Implications for the United States

At present the odds are against a positive outcome at Geneva within the eight days UN Secretary General Waldheim has allowed for the proceedings. The South Africans are unlikely to commit themselves to the March target date without having first obtained significant revisions in the UN plan. Reaching mutually acceptable revisions will require difficult and time consuming negotiations. Given the presence of the mutually antagonistic Namibian parties and the ready ammunition they will have in the form of the

unresolved procedural issues, the conference probably will break down into rhetorical fireworks long before serious negotiations can begin.

Even if a businesslike atmosphere is maintained in Geneva, a possible flare-up in the insurgency might cause one of the principal parties to walk out. In the past, the South Africans have launched major counterinsurgency operations during sensitive phases of the negotiating process, apparently aiming either to induce SWAPO and the Frontline States to make concessions or to derail the negotiating process.

Waldheim apparently felt compelled to set an early closing date for the conference to obtain the agreement of the African bloc to postpone a General Assembly debate on Namibia that probably would have resulted in a resolution calling on the Security Council to adopt mandatory economic sanctions against South Africa. Militants within the African bloc almost certainly will resume their campaign for sanctions with broad Communist and Third-World support if convincing evidence is not obtained by mid-January that Pretoria is willing to go ahead soon with the UN plan.

The African bloc apparently views a demand for a total trade embargo against South Africa as a device to induce the West to back more limited measures, such as a cutoff of commercial air traffic with South Africa. Even a token embargo, however, might lead Pretoria to withdraw its support for the UN plan and undercut Western efforts to deal constructively with Pretoria on other issues. Influential members of Prime Minister Botha's National Party adamantly oppose any dilution of white supremacy, even in Namibia, and would depict Western backing for any new sanctions as proving the futility of dealing with Western leaders who urge South Africa to adopt reformist policies that would counter international criticism.

A Western veto of a sanctions resolution in the absence of evident progress toward a Namibia settlement could make it politically impossible for the Frontline leaders to continue backing Western efforts to end the guerrilla war. Throughout the prolonged settlement talks the Frontline leaders have maintained, with some Western encouragement, that they, and the Western Five, would back additional sanctions against South Africa if the Frontline States

guaranteed SWAPO's observance of a UN truce and Pretoria balked. If a Western veto of a sanctions resolution made the Frontline leaders appear as stooges, they very likely would disassociate themselves from the UN plan and reaffirm their backing for the SWAPO insurgency.

The most the West can probably expect from the eight-day conference is a messy outcome that will fall short of obtaining unequivocal South African agreement to the March target date, but will entail gestures of good faith from Pretoria sufficiently convincing to head off a call for UN sanctions and buy time for the participants at Geneva to continue trying to reach mutually acceptable transition arrangements. The maximum efforts of the Western and African "observers" will be required to obtain even such an outcome, however, and the Frontline States and Western Five would have to devote considerable diplomatic energies to preventing any post-Geneva negotiations from breaking down.

The most immediate problem facing the Western sponsors of the UN plan is that of convincing the South Africans that a UN task force in Namibia will not be partial to SWAPO. Ultimately, Pretoria's decision on whether to offer even minimal assurances of good faith at Geneva may hinge on Prime Minister Botha's assessment of the Western Five's willingness to maintain sufficient leverage over the UN task force to avert a deliberate tilt toward SWAPO and to assure that the task force can effectively cope with violations of agreed groundrules.

The Western Five, of course, cannot give Botha the ironclad guarantees that he may demand; Waldheim has already excluded all the major powers from direct participation in either the military task force or the civil staff that would conduct the election. Nevertheless, Western logistical support is indispensable to the UN operation; the United States, for instance, has agreed to a major role in the airlift of the seven infantry battalions to Namibia. Botha might be reassured by vigorous US support of the preparatory measures that should get underway in January if the projected UN task force is to be ready for effective action in March.

If the South Africans make it clear that they no longer intend to delay the arrival of a UN task force in Namibia, Frontline leaders might be willing to back transitional arrangements, short of constitutional guarantees, that would tend to limit SWAPO's opportunities for gaining

full control of an independent Namibia. For instance, procedural rules for the constituent assembly, such as requiring an 80 percent majority for adopting a constitution, could give some leverage to the parties that failed to gain a majority in the constituent assembly. Such rules would not be digressions from the UN plan, which stipulates truce arrangements but merely sketches the latter phases of the transitional scenario.



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